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Editorial

THE LOEB CLASSICAL LIBRARY

One of the most significant chapters in the recently published *Latin and Greek in American Education* is the letter by James Loeb, the New York banker. In the course of his forcible plea for classical studies in the schools he declares that—

conversation among men, and between men and women, is steadily losing those finer qualities which make an exchange of ideas profitable and uplifting. With the absence of respect for authority, which characterizes the youth of today, we are fast losing that respect for the dignity of our own work which alone can give that work real and lasting value. The foolish attempt to keep abreast of the so-called literature of the day, of those morbid, pseudo-psychological novels, the prying and indelicate memoirs—to say nothing of the even more pernicious products of untutored writers—would be impossible, were the taste of our growing youths and maidens formed by a proper study of Greek and Latin literature, the Bible, and the classics of our own and other languages. The applause bestowed on the decadent drama, the vulgar comedy, the immoral and dirty play would turn into hisses, were the audience better acquainted with the works of Aeschylus and Sophocles.

Mr. Loeb's confession of faith in the value of the ancient literature is now followed by the announcement that through his financial support the publishers, Heinemann in London and Macmillan in New York, will at once begin the publication of a great library of translations of Greek and Latin literature, covering the whole period from the Homeric poems to the fall of Constantinople. The editors are to be T. E. Page, of Charterhouse, and W. H. D. Rouse, of the Perse School, Cambridge. They will be assisted by an advisory board consisting of Capps of Princeton, Croiset of the Institut de France, Crusius of Munich, Diels of Berlin, Frazer of Cambridge, Hale of Chicago, Murray of Oxford, Reinach of the Institut de France, Sandys of Cambridge, and White of Harvard.

With rare exceptions the versions will be in prose. Where

standard English translations are already available, these will be reprinted. A large number of scholars in England and America will be invited to prepare the other translations for the series. The volumes will contain the Greek or Latin text and the translation on opposite pages. The whole of each author is to be given, and a biographical introduction will be included in each set. It is expected that twenty volumes will be issued the first year.

The Loeb library will serve a double purpose; it will furnish to those who are entirely dependent on translation for their use of classical literature versions that are based on the best texts, made by scholars who are specialists in the several fields, and written in idiomatic English. In the case of many of the authors such translations are not now available. Of course for these readers the printing of the Greek and Latin texts will have no value, but another large class of readers will heartily welcome this arrangement. Many who have knowledge enough of Greek and Latin to enable them to use text and translation together with pleasure and profit are quite unable to read the text alone with sufficient accuracy and rapidity to give any satisfaction. Professional men who have dropped their classical studies altogether will be tempted to re-read their college authors, and to extend their reading into a much wider field. There is the more need for a series of this sort in a country where, as here, most of the men and women who study Greek and Latin at all in college drop the work at the close of the Freshman year. If such students are to do anything more with Latin and Greek literature, it will have to be by some such means as this; very few will have time or patience to do it in the really scholarly way.

Whether, as is suggested by an editorial writer in the *Nation* of November 9, the volumes will contain "brief and decisive notes," giving at the foot of the page "the kind of simple information, biographical and other, for which the schoolboy is properly sent to books of reference," is not announced. Such brief notes are certainly desirable; without them many passages will be unintelligible. Of course purely linguistic matters would have no place in such notes.

Mr. Loeb deserves the hearty thanks of classical scholars for making possible this popularizing of the ancient literature, and still more for opening the way for many who have barely reached the threshold of the temple to pass on into at least its outer courts.